

The Faithful Steward

A Newsletter of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America

Saint Paisii Velichkovskii

Whom the Holy Church Commemorates on November 15.

Compiled by Priestmonk Theodore

Saint Paisii was born on December 21, 1722 in Poltava, Ukraine to a family of priests. His father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were all priests. His mother became a nun later in life, as did his grandmother and aunt. He was baptized with the name of Petr. His father, Fr. John, was the rector of Dormition Cathedral.

His father reposed when Saint Paisii was four years old. Sent to school by his mother, Irina, he studied the Horologion and the Psalter for two years. His elder brother, a priest, taught him how to write. As soon as Petr had learned to read, reading became his favorite activity. He read and reread all the spiritual books he could find at home and in the Cathedral's library. He read the Old and New Testaments, the lives of the Saints, the homilies of St. John Chrysostom, St. Ephraim the Syrian and others. He was inspired with love for the monastic life by his continual reading of spiritual literature and especially the lives of the ascetics. He secluded himself in his room where he read continually and prayed. His silence was amazing. His family



would not hear a word from him for days at a time. The Saint's joyful friendliness shone on his face; he was neither morose nor despondent. He was fully immersed in his inner life, in his treasured prayerful abiding in God. In the presence of people Petr was, in the words of his biographer, so shy and meek that even his own mother rarely heard his voice.

At the age of 13, Saint Paisii entered Kiev Theological School, which later became the Theological Academy. The academic discipline was on a very high level. Some 1200 students were in attendance at that time. Petr's interests, however, were not academic but monastic. He was interested in the salvation of the soul. He began his search for true monasticism. While in school in Kiev he, for a season, applied himself to his studies. Gradually, his academic zeal declined as his true vocation developed. A fellow stu-

dent, himself a native of Poltava, noticed that, since Petr was not studying, his mother's money for tuition was probably being wasted. Informed of this, the prefect sent for Velichkovsky and asked for an explanation for his lack of attention to his studies. Petr replied:

"The first reason is that, because I have a firm intention of becoming a monk and being conscious of the unexpectedness of death, I want to be tonsured as soon as possible. The second reason is that I see nothing useful for the soul in external learning. I hear only the names of pagan gods and wise men—Cicero, Aristotle and Plato. By learning their wisdom people of today have become blinded to the end and have digressed from the true way. Intellectuals utter words but, internally, they are filled with darkness and gloom, for their wisdom is of the world only... I do not say these things in judgment. After being trained in such external wisdom, I fear and tremble that I, being a monk, will fall into worse infirmity and feebleness. For these reasons I left external learning."

Shortly thereafter, in 1739, one month short of age seventeen, Petr left the attractions of the world and began to search for true monasticism. He found a monastery near the Dnieper River where he began his monastic life. He was assigned to a cell with an old monk. After this monk reposed, the gentle hegumen Nikifor gave Petr this old monk's coarse grey cassock. Saint Paisii, deeply grateful for this gift, went back to his cell where he kissed the tattered garment like a sacred object. He wore it until he had to throw it away.

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This hegumen was replaced by another man who was imperious. After having been struck so hard by him that Petr was nearly knocked off his feet, Saint Paisii, together with a friend, fled that monastery and crossed over to the right bank of the Dnieper.

At this time this part of the country had fallen on hard times. It was suffering very much because of the religious fanaticism of the Jesuits and the Uniates.¹ Archbishop Filaret of Chernigov described this persecution in his history of the Church:

“It is difficult to imagine all the cruelties and torments endured by the Orthodox at this time. Orthodox priests were tied to stakes and scourged with whips, thrown into prison, refused food, dismembered of their fingers, and their arms and legs were broken. Any survivors of such tortures who still refused the *Unia* were driven from their homes. From day to day, monasteries were attacked, plundered and burned, and the monks were tortured and often times killed. Rural dwellers, merchants and tradesmen were subjected to torture in order to force them into the *Unia*. Like sheep, the Orthodox were driven into the Uniate Church. On one occasion a henchman walked into an Orthodox Church during the Gospel reading and began beating the people there with a whip, driving them out like cattle. Many people suffered the destruction of their homes and death itself in the battles.”

Saint Paisii, together with a friend, was on his way to Moldavia at this time and was aware of the risks that he and his companions as Orthodox Christians faced in their travels. Petr got caught in a violent thunderstorm with walnut-sized hailstones; separated from his friends, and soaked to the skin, he spent the night in a village hut. He found his companions staying in a school near the home of the village cantor. They had been asking him how to travel into Moldavia.

In response to this question the cantor said:

“Holy Fathers, I advise you not to go there. Soldiers are patrolling the roads everywhere in search of thieves and brigands. If you should fall into their hands, they will assault you cruelly out of their hatred for our Orthodox faith.

There was one such assault recently in our village. The cantor who preceded me here was afraid of denunciation by the persecutors of Orthodoxy. While reading the Creed during the Divine Liturgy he read the eighth article in the following way: ‘And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, Who truly proceeds from the Father’; and for some time he was deceiving the Uniates in this way.² Before long, however, he was reported to the landlord for not reciting the Creed according to the Uniate practice. Upon hearing this, the landlord went into a rage. He called a soldier and together they entered the church just before the Creed was to have been read. When that blessed cantor had stepped out into the center of the church and began reading the Creed,

the landlord drew near to him and listened to every single word attentively. The cantor knew why the landlord was present so he read especially loudly, slowly and triumphantly, and when he came to the words ‘And in the Holy Spirit,’ he, himself being filled with the Holy Spirit, exclaimed loudly and distinctly: ‘And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father,’ omitting the word ‘truly’ which he used to add to the text because of his fear. The landlord screamed out like a wild animal and, seizing the cantor by his hair, threw him down onto the church floor and began kicking him. He had the cantor dragged out from the church and cruelly beaten with rods. While he was being beaten someone in the crowd rushed to fetch the mother of the cantor. She ran to her son and with tears in her eyes encouraged him not to lose his staunch spirit but to give up his life for his faith.

‘Do not fear such fleeting suffering,’ she said, ‘but endure it unto death that you may be worthy to receive the crown of martyrdom from Christ in Heaven.’

‘Have no doubts about me, dear mother,’ the martyr said, ‘for I am ready to endure not only these wounds for my faith but a thousand times more. This is the sure hope of my salvation.’ Upon hearing such words, the mother of the cantor greatly rejoiced in her soul and she thanked Christ for allowing her to be the mother of a martyr for the faith. When the landlord saw and heard what was happening between the cantor and his mother, he ordered the soldiers to beat the martyr even more fiercely. Under the heavy blows the martyr finally delivered his soul into the hands of God.”

This story alarmed the travelers. They heeded the cantor’s advice and decided not to go to Moldavia. Petr met a pious hermit named Isikhii and chose to stay with him. Isikhii had a great love for spiritual books from the pens of the holy Fathers. Although Petr wanted to stay with him, Isikhii declined. Saint Paisii was seeking a spiritual father.

Farther along the way, at the St. Nikolai Monastery, Petr was tonsured a riasophore monk on the feast of the Transfiguration with the name Platon. At the instigation of the Uniates, storm clouds threatened. Platon, our Saint Paisii, decided to go to Kiev. He was admitted into the community of the Caves Lavra. A year later, with his friend Aleksei, Platon fled Kiev for Moldo-Walachia.

Here Platon first met Starets Vasilii of Poiana Marului. This Starets was to provide Platon with good counsel. Platon had heard that Starets Vasilii might want to ordain him to the priesthood; Platon did not want this to happen. Platon resolved this tension by moving to Mount Athos. A new period in his life began in 1746 when he moved to Mount Athos and ended in 1763 when he, with his synodia, left the Holy Mountain for Moldo-Walachia, i.e. modern Romania. Saint Paisii remained there until his repose in 1794.

Platon’s life on Mount Athos during these 17 years may be summarized by four important events: 1) A period of

seclusion, 2) a search for Patristic³ literature on prayer, 3) another meeting with Starets Vasilii, and 4) the formation of his monastic community.

Platon's seclusion was occasioned by his desire to be guided by someone who lived in silence and poverty and who was thoroughly conversant with Patristic literature. Since he could not find a monastic who met his criteria, he elected to live alone. By living in such a way for the four years' time, a shy and timid boy was transformed into a strong, experienced man. His time was spent in avid reading, chanting psalms, study of scripture, Patristic texts, and, most importantly, in interior prayer. Platon struggled to cultivate within himself profound humility, continual self-reproach, contrition of heart, an abundance of tears, love for God and neighbor, and a constant remembrance of death.

This intense and profitable internal struggle was, in Saint Paisii's case, complemented by a thoroughgoing search for accurate Patristic texts teaching the monk how to live the monastic life. These two tasks, 1) and 2) above, form the core of Saint Paisii's lifelong work. He was granted the grace continually to intensify these tasks until the end of his life. He never laid aside his translator's quill.

The search for Patristic literature on prayer began with an examination of the Slavonic texts on prayer that St. Paisii had collected. From this examination arose a clear realization of the innumerable errors in the Slavonic translations of these texts. St. Paisii then undertook the formidable task of correcting these inaccurate translations and the occluded passages in the Patristic texts. He writes,

"While I was still living on Mount Athos, I became well aware of the teachings and commandments of our God-bearing Fathers as to how the director of a monastic community should guide or teach his monks, not on the basis of his own mentality and reasoning but rather, via his adherence to the true and correct teachings of the Holy Scriptures, the Fathers, ecumenical teachers and instructors in monasticism, who were enlightened by the Holy Spirit. At the same time, being well aware of my own small-mindedness and apprehensive of my own inexperience, afraid of falling like a blind man into a pit and bringing down along with myself others as well, I decided to adopt the Old and New Testaments, and the Sacred Tradition of the Church (the teachings of our God-bearing Fathers, the ecumenical teachers and instructors of monastic life, the rules of apostolic councils and of our Holy Fathers which are kept by the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of the East) and all their commandments and regulations as the unshakable foundation for monastic life. I adopted all this as guidance for myself and for my brethren in order that, living together and benefiting from this by the co-operation and instruction of Divine Grace itself, we might not digress from the true, pure and wholesome catholic mentality of the Holy Orthodox Church."

Difficulties, however, arose in St. Paisii's attempts to rec-

oncile errors in the Slavonic transcriptions of Patristic texts. He came to understand that he could not correct the Slavonic texts by other texts in Slavonic. He found a way to overcome this problem:

"I lost all hope of finding any translations among Slavonic texts that would be as correct and accurate in meaning as the Hellenic Greek originals. After spending a few years on Mount Athos and becoming comfortable with at least simple, colloquial Greek, I attempted to locate original Greek texts in order to compare them with their Slavonic versions. No matter where I searched, I was unsuccessful. I went to the St. Anna Skete of the Great Lavra, to the Sketes of Kapsokaliva, to the St. Demetrius Skete of Vatopedi and to many other lavras and monasteries, questioning knowledgeable people, experienced spiritual fathers and pious novices, but nowhere was I able to find even one such book. Not only did I receive the same negative reply from all whom I asked, but I also discovered that they were not even familiar with the names of the compliers. I was absolutely bewildered and wonder-struck that in such a holy place, where so many great saints lived, not only was I unable to locate their great ascetical writings but their names were not even known. This saddened me tremendously. Nevertheless my hope in God was not destroyed and I prayed to Him to help me find the precious sources. My gentle and merciful God answered my fervent prayer. I finally found the books for which I was searching and some I even obtained as personal possessions.

"My good fortune happened in the following way. On one occasion I was traveling with two monks from the St. Athanasius Lavra to the St. Anna Skete and I was passing near the high hill of the Prophet Elias Skete which was the same height as the third highest peak of Holy Athos. At the top of this hill was St. Basil the Great Monastery which had been just recently built by monks who had left Caesarea Cappadocia. The skete was located in a most barren locale where—aside from rain—there was no water source. There were no vineyards, no olive or fig trees. We wanted to stop by, partly to give our regards and partly to look around since we had never been in this particular skete. We entered and sat near the church. A novice noticed us and immediately invited us to his cell. He went to find some food to give us after our journey. As I stood at the open window of his cell I noticed an open book on his little table. It was obviously the transcription of some monk. I examined it more closely and discovered that it was a text by St. Peter the Damascene. Ineffable joy flooded my soul. I felt that I had found a heavenly treasure on earth.

"When the novice returned, I asked him how such a precious book had ended up in his cell. He replied that he had still another book by the same saint. In reply to my further inquiries, the novice disclosed where I could find other ascetical books: the works of St. Anthony the Great, St. Gre-

gory the Sinaite, St. Philotheus, St. Hesychius, St. Diodochus, St. Thalassius, St. Symeon the New Theologian, St. Nicephoros, St. Isaiah and others. When I asked him why I had been unable to locate any of these books, he answered that no one was able to read them. They were written in pure Hellenic Greek which none but educated Greeks could read. Thus, these books were almost completely forgotten. The novices who had just arrived from Caesarea Cappadocia came to Athos when they heard about these books. They learned not only colloquial Greek but ancient Greek as well in order to copy these books and to study them as best they could. Filled with joy over the news I had heard, I begged the novice to make copies of his books for me and promised to pay whatever sum he would require. The novice was so overburdened with copywork at the time, however, that he was forced to refuse and directed me to another copier instead. When I asked the second, also a novice, I promised him triple the price that was usually requested by the first novice. But, seeing my burning desire to have the books, he refused the triple sum and promised to copy the books with the help of God for the regular price.

This is how Starets Paisii finally acquired his long desired treasure. He could now begin to correct the Slavonic patristic⁴ texts from their ancient Greek originals. This happened only two years before his departure from Mount Athos to Moldo-Walachia. By that time, the novice who had agreed to copy the books was able to finish transcribing only a portion of what Starets Paisii had requested. Nevertheless Starets Paisii accepted them as a gift from God and carried them away with him to Moldo-Walachia where he used them for his correction work."

Previously we listed four points that occupied Saint Paisii's attention. We now turn to the third point, the proper order of monastic life.

In the beginning of 1750, Starets Vasilii arrived on Mount Athos. Saint Paisii, at this time known as the Riassophore Platon, had previously known Starets Vasilii in Walachia. Starets Vasilii's arrival on the Holy Mountain was of considerable importance for Platon. Starets Vasilii explained to Platon the danger of silence and solitude and the necessity of a community life for beginning ascetics. Starets Vasilii made it abundantly clear that all of monastic society is divided into three types.

The first type, cenobitic monasticism, is community monasticism whereby many monks, living together in a community, share a common routine, and a common life under obedience to an Abbot. All property is community property; no one has anything that can be called one's own. All meals are taken together in silence listening to the reading of the

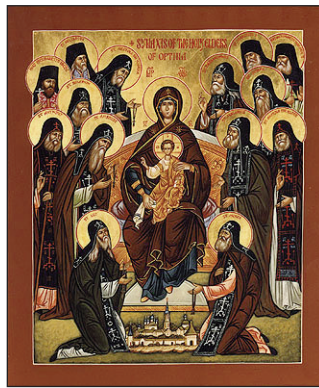
Lives of Saints. The community worships together. The second type, semi-eremitic monasticism, is the sharing of a common life by two or three monks who settle together and live in obedience to each other out of their love and fear of God. Any property, such as food or clothing, is shared by the brotherhood. They live by exchanging their handicrafts for goods. Each of these Fathers lives in concern for one another and remains detached from his individual personal will. The community, as in the case of the cenobitic monks, worships together.

Only holy and perfect men are suitable for the third type of monasticism, the eremitic life. They live alone and may, or may not, gather for Saturday and Sunday liturgies and fellowship. Such monastics maintain a life of quietness, a stillness of the heart and of the body. In this atmosphere of silence and seclusion, these fathers practice the prayer of the heart, "Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me." This is the hesychastic path, the way of stillness, of *hesychia*.

Starets Vasilii also mentioned another path. Currently, he indicated, some monks opposing the directions of the Fathers are choosing a fourth form of life for themselves. Each monk builds his own grotto where he lives by himself and independently from other monastics. Each monk prefers the dictates of his own will to a life of obedience under the direction of a spiritual guide. Although such individuals may seem similar to the eremites, they are actually quite arbitrary in their existence. They, in fact, hinder their own salvation because they follow a path of life for which they are spiritually inadequate. After a careful reading of St. Gregory the Sinaite, one will discover that what is referred to as arbitrariness is actually such a cloistered, self-determined way of life. It is far better for one to live together with one's brothers, to acknowledge one's own faults, to repent daily, and thereby to be cleansed by Christ than to cover such faults by a feigned existence. Such people, says Saint John Climacus, cannot see any indications of their passionateness. St. Barsanuphius says that premature silence is the cause of high-mindedness.⁵

At Platon's request, Starets Vasilii tonsured him to the rank of mantiya-bearer and changed his name to Paisii. In 1763, Saint Paisii and his community of monks decided to leave Mount Athos and to settle in Moldo-Walachia. Great labors of prayer preceded this decision. There was, perhaps, some exchange of letters between the Saint and spiritual and secular authorities. In a letter to the Priest Demetrius the Elder outlines his reasons for having to leave Mount Athos.

"The very location, so cruel and difficult, was hardly conducive to life on Mount Athos, since two or three monks



Fathers of the Optina Hermitage
relied heavily on
their Paisian heritage

living together could hardly meet their bodily needs even with bloody sweat and hard labor. What made life even more difficult was the great number of monks.⁶ Beside that, the Turkish rulers would demand tributes from our impoverished community similar to those paid to them by the other monasteries of Athos which, as I was told, were obligatory and fixed. For these reasons and others, about which I have already written to you, we feared that our community, created by much labor and effort, would be broken apart and meet its end. I therefore put all my hope in Almighty God, who is praised in all places of His dominion, and decided to leave with my community from the Holy Mountain for the Orthodox land, Moldo-Walachia.”

Saint Paisii was 41 years old at this time. He rented two ships, one for the Slavic monks and the other for the Moldavian fathers. The Saint traveled with the Slavic monks; Father Vissarion, the first member of his community on Mount Athos, sailed with the Moldavian monks. They set sail and landed first in Constantinople and then went on to Galati, where the Saint, seventeen years earlier, had set out for Mount Athos. They were first placed in the Varzareshti Skete, and then allowed to enter the Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Dragomirna, Bukovina. This monastery was probably founded at the end of the 16th century. It is located in the beautiful Carpathian mountain valleys.

The following is a selection from a note Saint Paisii wrote to the monks who went into the fields at harvest time:

“Beware of envy. Wherever there is envy, God’s spirit does not exist. Control the tongue, so that it will not utter empty words. Whoever preserves his tongue, preserves his soul from grief. Life and death both come from the tongue. The old should teach the young and the inexperienced. Everyone should have humility, kindness, and love. It is necessary to strengthen oneself by the fear of God and by the memory of death and eternal sufferings. One’s thoughts should be conferred to the starets every day.⁷ The Jesus Prayer is to be repeated constantly. Offer a pure, undefiled, and sweet-smelling sacrifice to God, according to your Christian promises. Offer your labors and bloody sweat as a burnt sacrifice. Let sunburn be for you as the endurance of the martyrs.

“In concluding the letter the starets prays that God will save those who labor from all spiritual and bodily harm and protect them from the wiles of the devil.”

A note from the Saint’s biographer includes this comment:

“I lived thirteen years with him, and never saw him grieving over material needs. The only time he would grieve intensely was whenever he saw the violation of God’s commandments.”

In spite of his constant solicitude for the brotherhood, Saint Paisii found time for his concern to provide the Church with authentic patristic literature concerning prayer and the spiritual life. He devoted whole nights to this task. Traveling

from Mount Athos with the patristic treasures written in Byzantine Greek obtained there, he began the detailed examination and correction of his Slavonic translations in Dragomirna.

In his textual-critical labors of the late 18th century, Saint Paisii anticipated the very methods employed by the scholars of the 19th century. His work was all done by hand. He sent the more scholarly monks to the Bucharest Academy to learn the grammar and vocabulary of Byzantine Greek, that is, the elevated Greek of the Fathers of the Church. This additional skill enabled his monks to continue in the path of his textual-critical discipline. The subsequent scholarly work done on *The Ascetical Homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian* in Moscow endeavored to follow the strict standards laid down by Saint Paisii in the field of literary criticism. This particular work also adhered closely to Saint Paisii’s own spiritual experience in effecting a translation of Saint Isaac’s text that was faithful to the hesychastic tradition established in the deserts of Egypt and Palestine even before the middle of the second century. Regrettably, Saint Paisii did not have access to scholarship in the Syriac in which Saint Isaac originally penned his *Homilies*.

Saint Paisii also became an advisor to other monastic communities especially in the Ukraine and in Russia.

The following is an excerpt from a letter the Saint wrote to the nun Maria Petrovna Protas’eva, head of St. Aleksei Community in Arzamas, Russia:

“Diligently, with much attention and reflection, read in the Fathers about the prayer performed by the mind in the heart, which is the truest and most pleasing to God of the monastic feats. Should you, with God’s help, acquire a correct understanding of this prayer through studying the Fathers, compel yourself to fulfill it, appealing to God for help, and your soul will be aided greatly by it. Compel yourself to judge no one, for the sole righteous Judge is Christ the Lord, who will give to everyone according to his deeds. Condemn only yourself, and you will not be condemned at His second and awesome coming. From your whole heart remit the sins of whoever sins before you, and your Father who is in heaven will remit your sins.”

In another context, the Saint quotes St. Symeon, Archbishop of Thessalonica, on the Jesus Prayer:

“This divine prayer of our Saviour consists of the appeal: O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me. This prayer is supplication, confession of faith, the giver of the Holy Spirit and the bestower of divine gifts, the purification of the heart, the expulsion of demons, the indwelling of Jesus Christ, the source of spiritual ideas and divine thoughts, deliverance from sins, the ministering to souls and bodies, the giver of divine illumination and the source of God’s mercy, the giver of revelations and divine mysteries to the meek, and it is salvation itself, for it carries within itself the saving

Name of our God—this being the name of Jesus Christ the Son of God which was betrothed to us.”

Saint Paisii continues, “Likewise, the other God-bearing Fathers, writing about this holy prayer, bear witness to its action, to the ineffable benefit deriving from it, and to the progress through it in the exercise of the divine gifts of the Holy Spirit.” (From *The Teaching of Starets Paisii on the Jesus Prayer in Six Chapters*.)

The teaching of the Holy Fathers on the Prayer of Jesus was, as we noted above, given first place in the Typicon of Saint Paisii’s Monasteries by being required to be said by all the monks as their own prayer. The effect of this practice in the Saint’s monasteries spread after his repose as is evident in the spiritual inheritance of the Glinskaia Hermitage where we hear of “Hieromonk Serapion, who saw his guardian angel and fingered his prayer rope for three hours after his death.”

Saint Paisii had full and unqualified faith in the holy Fathers of the Holy Orthodox Church. He followed the word of Saint Euthymius the Great:

“Be careful and heed the teaching of the Fathers as though it were the word of God Himself” (*The Great Collection of the Lives of the Saints*, Vol. 5: January, p. 345).

Our Saint encouraged others to approach the holy Fathers in the same way:

“I plead and ask you from my whole heart to have undoubting faith in the Fathers and in the teachings contained in them, for they agree in all respects with the Divine Scriptures and with the minds of all the ecumenical teachers and the entire Holy Church, because one and the same Holy Spirit was working in them. The teaching found in the Fathers is truly instruction for monks wishing to be saved...”

Touching upon a question of considerable interest over 200 years later in the 21st century, Saint Paisii is asked by a correspondent about a certain conciliar anathema imposed by the Eastern Patriarchs.

He replies,

“My answer is that a curse or anathema upon those opposing the catholic Church...and not submitting to the Church...which has been imposed by a council of Eastern patriarchs, remains through the grace of Christ firm, unshakable, and irreversible until the end of the age. You also ask if any Eastern council has lifted the anathema which has been imposed. And I answer, could there be such a council, except for one in opposition to God and the Holy Church, which would assemble to repudiate the truth and confirm falsehood? There would never be such an evil council.

“And you ask if any bishops can lift such a curse without the council’s knowledge and the consent and will of the Eastern patriarchs. And I say that this is totally impossible. Keep in mind that all the bishops receive the same grace of the Holy Spirit when they are consecrated and are obliged to guard, as the apple of the eye, the purity and immaculacy of the Orthodox faith, along with all the apostolic traditions

and the rules of the holy apostles, ecumenical and local councils, and the God-bearing Fathers contained in the Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. From the same Holy Spirit they received the authority to bind and loose according to the order established by the Holy Spirit through the holy apostles in the Holy Church. The bishops did not receive the authority to destroy the apostolic traditions and rules of the Church from the Holy Spirit.

“Therefore, neither the bishops nor the Eastern patriarchs can lift the above anathema placed on the opponents of the Catholic Church, as having been imposed correctly and in accordance to the holy councils. And if anyone would attempt to do this, it would be against God and the Holy Church. You also ask that if none of the bishops can lift this anathema without the Eastern patriarchs, has it not been lifted by the latter?

“I answer that not only any bishop without the Eastern patriarchs, but the Eastern patriarchs themselves cannot lift this curse, as has sufficiently been said already, for such an anathema is eternally irrevocable.”

Elsewhere he remarks,

“...hold to the healthy mind and reasoning of the Catholic Church in everything, and in this way you will never fall into error.”

Continuing in this vein, the Saint poses a question that has been addressed to him, and makes his reply,

“Can a true Christian have and read books forbidden by the Church...?”

“My answer is that the Divine Church forbids reading heretical books and holding discussions with heretics. In a book on the profession of the Orthodox faith, there is a question asking ‘What is the fifth commandment of the Church?’⁸

“The answer is that those who are unlearned in the Holy Scriptures and other necessary fields should not read heretical books or listen to the harmful teachings of heretics, or even speak and have dealings with them, as the psalm-singer prophet says: ‘Blessed is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners...’ (Ps. 1:1 LXX). Elsewhere the Holy Scripture says: ‘As for a man who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him’ (Titus 3:10). Watch carefully and note that the Divine Church does not command everyone not to read heretical books and not to hold discussions with heretics, but only those who are unlearned in the Holy Scriptures and the various fields of learning.... This is why the Church forbids those who are unlearned in the Holy Scriptures and the other fields to read heretical books and to have discussions with heretics, so that they will not, due to their unsophistication, be harmed by their teachings. Those who have studied the Holy Scriptures and the other fields are exempt from this commandment... Thus, one who starts reading schismatic books must lack neither theological knowledge nor worldly learning. For the one who does not

have the appropriate knowledge, it is better to obey God and the Church commandment which says: 'Do not read heretical books and do not take part in discussions with heretics.'...True Christians obey the Church in everything."

In the question above raised by a layman, and Saint Paisii's compassionate and comprehensive response, he displays in words the sweetness of character that so enlightened him as he addressed his disciples as to inspire the author of his Kontakion to pen these lines:

"Thou wast joyful of mien; thou didst incline thine ear unto them that asked for thine aid and didst stretch forth thy hand to lift them up..."

What greater accolade could anyone possibly receive?

Returning to our sources, the Saint responds to a question about how to be saved while living in the world with a wife and children in the following manner.

"Who can include in a brief word everything relating to the matter of salvation? I can only give you my advice for you to read the Divine Scriptures and our Holy Fathers with the greatest zeal, for to them is given the understanding of the mysteries of the heavenly kingdom, i.e. the true sense of the Holy Scriptures. In their soul-enlightened teachings, we can find in their entirety, all instructions necessary for spiritual salvation, which inspire anyone wishing to be saved to perform various good deeds and flee any deeds contrary to God. Reading their teaching zealously and diligently with faith and love, and with the fear of God and complete attention, you will have constant encouragement for various good deeds necessary for your salvation. And I, with all my unworthiness, recognizing that you are seeking instruction from me, can answer the following:

"The most merciful God saves the souls of Orthodox Christians through the Orthodox faith, good deeds, and His grace. The Orthodox faith is the one which is contained in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, and without this faith it is impossible for anyone to be saved. Good deeds are Gospel Commandments without which, as without the Orthodox faith, it is likewise impossible for anyone to be saved. The Orthodox faith without good deeds is a dead faith, and good deeds without the Orthodox faith are dead deeds. Whoever wishes to be saved must unite the two, and in this way, through the grace of Christ God, who said, 'Without Me you can do nothing,' he can try to attain salvation. One should know that Christ the Saviour made good deeds equally obligatory for all Orthodox Christians, be they monks or laymen living in the world with wives and children, and seeks and demands from everyone the most zealous performance of His commandments, so that those who violate them and do not repent will have no excuse and will not be able to stand at His awesome Second Coming. All Orthodox Christians... can all fulfill Christ's commandments, with the help of God's grace, without any difficulty through only their good will and spiritual humility, and in this way they can be saved."

Saint Paisii closes with these words:

"And if in my answers I have erred in anything as a human being, then do not follow my error, but hold to the healthy mind and reasoning of the Catholic Church in everything, and in this way you will never fall into error. Let the God of love and peace be with all of you. Amen."

Saint Paisii's move to the Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Dragomirna, Bukovina was followed by a short residence in Dragomir due to war between Russia and Turkey. The Fathers evacuated to Secu where the Saint's labors in translation began in earnest. Facilities here were cramped. In 1779 the Saint was required to move to Niamets. This was an occasion for grievous tears for the Saint. One of the blessings of life on the Holy Mountain, in Dragomir and Secu was the absence of women. The move to Niamets placed his community near centers of population. The Saint was apprehensive over such proximity to towns and villages and of the consequent disturbance to the undistracted quiet that is an absolute necessity for a hesychast. Nevertheless, the Saint did obedience to Prince Konstantin and made the move. He left some of his monks in Secu and he moved to Niamets with all the others. The number of brethren now gathered around him exceeded 700. Word of the monastery's adherence to Patristic monastic order, and its rule of prayer spread throughout the Slavic, Orthodox East. Once again, we have evidence of the Victory of Orthodoxy. Jesus Christ Conquers.⁹

After a brief illness Saint Paisii at the age of 72 reposed on November 15, 1794.

The glorification of Saint Paisii Velichkovskii under Saint Metropolitan Philaret was performed by the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia on the Feast Day of the Holy Prophet Elias on July 20, 1982 at the Russian Skete of St. Elias on Mount Athos, which was founded by Saint Paisii.

Saint Paisii's relics were discovered to be incorrupt during the last investigation of them in 1872, as well as in the previous years of 1846, 1853, and 1861.

Dismissal Hymn Fourth Tone

O Paisius, the joy of Russia, the boast of Athos and the wonder of Moldavia, by thy divinely-inspired teaching thou dost direct us to the fount of wisdom and salvation. And now, as thou enjoyest in Heaven the vision of Christ God, entreat Him that He grant us His great mercy and save our souls.

Endnotes

¹ The Uniates were members of a Roman Catholic group called the Unia because of its union with the Pope of Rome. The worship, music, and vestments were Orthodox in style but the *filioque* was inserted into the Creed and the Pope was commemorated during the Divine Liturgy.

² There is a play on words here. The Uniates wanted the cantor to say the Creed with the *filioque*, which in Russian is *syna*. The word ‘truly,’ which the cantor used in its place is *istinno*. Pronounced quickly, it would be hard to distinguish the two.

³ Patristic literature is comprised of those writings written by the holy Fathers of the Church who lived after the repose of the Apostles. Some of them, e.g. Ss. Dionysius the Areopagite, Ignatius of Antioch, and Polycarp of Smyrna, were taught by an Apostle. These Fathers are Orthodox Saints and have services written for them as recorded in the Menaion of the Orthodox Church. The word, ‘patristic’ is derived from the Greek word, ‘pater,’ which means ‘father’. In terms of the faithful transmission of the Apostolic Faith, the order stands as St. Athanasius states it: “What Christ preached to the Apostles, the Apostles transmitted (traditioned) to the Fathers, and was kept by the Fathers” (*Ad Serapion* I, 28).

⁴ It is impossible to overestimate the importance of prayer. The object of Saint Paisii’s search is the very heart of the life of any Orthodox Christian. We can learn to pray when, first, we have an Orthodox bishop who is not alone but is a member of a synod of faithful (faithful to the vows they took when they were ordained) Orthodox hierarchs. Then, second, when we have close at hand an ascetical priest to whom we can look for an example and turn for help when we have to navigate difficult straits in our lives. We can then undertake the profitable labor of prayer.

Prayer is, as Saint John Climacus writes in *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, “the mother of virtues” (see Step 28). When we have the mother, then we have all her children, that is, all the virtues. Since this is true in everyday life, so, the Orthodox Fathers teach us, it is true in our life in the Holy Spirit.

In our Orthodox prayer, we draw up from the Baptismal Font all our future benefits. Plunged and immersed three times into the waters of Baptism, we partake of Christ’s three days in the tomb, we partake of all the saving energies of the Holy Trinity, and we enter here in this transient life into the power of the endless life of Christ (Heb. 7:16) in which the days have no night, the sunrise is not followed by sunset, and the glory of Christ forever grows in our hearts.

⁵ This path is known as idiorhythmic monasticism.

⁶ By this time the Saint’s brotherhood had grown to 64 monastics.

⁷ On telling thoughts: “Each evening the brethren, beginners in particular, would come to their starets to confess their thoughts. The Saint considered the confession of thoughts to be the basis of spiritual life and saw in it the hope for salvation of the soul which sincerely repents of its sins.”

⁸ Our resources do not indicate what this might be. Still we may safely assume that Saint Paisii is referring to a standard catechetical text.

⁹ Saints Macarius Bishop of Corinth (1731-1805) and Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain (1749-1809) joined in the compilation of selected material from the holy Fathers on the prayer of the heart and the ordering of the monastic life that offered guidance to Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians similar to the work of Saint Paisii Velichkovsky (1722-1794), which likewise enabled Orthodox Christians in the Slavic lands to make similar efforts in their own struggles. The Greek *Philokalia* or “Love of Beauty” was published in Venice in 1782. Saint Paisii’s Slavonic *Dobrotolubiye* (*Philokalia*) was published in Moscow in 1783.

He completed his major work, the translation of Saint Isaac the Syrian’s *Ascetical Homilies*, in 1787. He wrote all his translations out by hand. “Each letter was as thin as a hair and did not smear, but came out distinct and clean, and the necessary margins were left on both sides, on top, and at the bottom. When an amazed pupil asked the starets if he had written that book with a pigeon quill, he replied, ‘No, with a goose quill.’” Thanks be to God for all things.

On Sale Now!

The Holy Orthodox Metropolis of Boston has printed the 2008 church wall calendar that St. Nectarios Press printed in the past. Orders are now being accepted for this calendar at a cost of \$8.00 plus S/H. Note: Discounts are available. Included with the calendar at no extra charge is a booklet containing the daily Epistle and Gospel readings. Contact us at (617) 323-6379 or email us at vikki@homb.org.

Fire Wreaks Severe Damage at St. Seraphim's Church



A view of the extensive fire damage at St. Seraphim's Church in Glen Allen, VA

Father Nicodemos Gayle and Presbyteria Lydia, just after 1 a.m. on October 8/21, received a call from a neighbor who lives next door to the church, saying that the building was ablaze. While Presbyteria stayed home to answer phone calls, Father began driving frantically toward the church, located some 25 miles from his home in Mechanicsville, VA. As he drove, Father kept hoping that the neighbor had made a mistake. But when he was still a mile-and-a-half away, he saw that the sky was lit up in the direction of the church. And as he drew closer, he saw large flames raging in the building where St. Seraphim's parishioners had been worshipping for the past thirteen years.

It was only three years ago that we completed a beautiful addition to our building. How hard we had all worked to complete the beautiful temple that is now burnt. As the faithful met later that morning in the yard behind the building to pray together, memories of all those long hours spent working so hard together ran through everyone's mind. Neighbors from all around the Church came by to offer kind words and gentle hugs to our parishioners. But as we all shed our tears and stood praying together, we remembered that

we are the Church and we are still standing. The building still smoldering before us could be rebuilt.

Though the Church building was a total loss, some rather amazing things happened. In the altar, the floor collapsed all around the holy table, but the holy table itself—with the Gospel and the antimimension—remained standing. The relics in the antimimension were not destroyed. And in the corner of the altar, just twenty feet from the hottest part of the fire, the prothesis table, which contained Father's vestments and the holy vessels, remained unburned. Our parishioners believe that while we lost our building, our dear St. Seraphim took care of our most important needs by saving the holy things.

Although it will be a long journey, the members of St. Seraphim of Sarov Orthodox Church are now turning their attention to the process of rebuilding an even more beautiful building to the Glory of God. We are so thankful for the many kind words of encouragement that we have received from our brothers and sisters from all across the country, and we ask for your continued prayers during the difficult months ahead.

Orthodox Prelate From Boston Visits Frankfort

On occasion of the recent opening of Saint John of San Francisco Orthodox Church, a new Orthodox Church in Frankfort, Illinois, Metropolitan Ephraim, the ruling Bishop of the Boston Diocese of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America (HOCNA) visited the Frankfort parish on Sunday, October 1/14. Temporarily located at 8775 W. Laraway, the new parish is a traditional Orthodox Christian parish that conducts most of its services in English. Those wishing to learn more about the new parish can call Father Michael Waples at (219) 226-1305 or Joanne Ketsios at (815) 806-8024.

Michael Waples was born and raised in the Lutheran church. In 1992 he moved his family from Cedar Rapids, Iowa to Fort Wayne, Indiana, where he received a Masters of

Divinity degree in 1996 from Concordia Theological Seminary of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. He then served parishes in Nebraska and Iowa until 2002. One of his passions was to read the Early Church Fathers. It was in his study of their writings and the contemporary practices he experienced in the church which led him to a dilemma. This finally led him to HOCNA—the succession and continuation of the Holy Apostles of Christ. When he found the Church, he resigned as a Lutheran pastor and moved his family to St. Paul, Minnesota, where they were baptized and chrismated on Sept. 30/October 13, 2002. Michael then learned the teaching and practices of the Orthodox Church, was made a reader, deacon, and finally a priest. Now Fr. Michael serves at St. John of San Francisco Orthodox Church.



Metropolitan Ephraim, Father Michael Waples, and the parishioners of St. John of San Francisco Orthodox Church

**To Our Blessed Brothers and Sisters of the
Holy Orthodox Church in North America
and to the Acquaintances and Friends
of Archbishop John, Wonderworker**

For some 10 year we have waited to open a permanent temple of God in the middle of America. We have existed as a mission and now its time for us to be a Church community. We are grateful for the Chapel funded and housed by Aristides and Joanne Ketsios and for the comfort of having occasional Divine Services with various clergy of our Diocese.

Father Michael Waples and his family have moved from Minneapolis to our area during the last week of August. However, residential codes would not allow us to continue operating as a church in the current residential location, so we had to move to a neutral location zoned for churches and/or commerce. We have managed to gather a modest amount of savings, have rented office space in a mini-mall and two of our parishioners have done all the necessary remodeling. Our place of worship is located in Frankfort, Illinois, a southern suburb of Chicago. Our first liturgy was on Sunday, September 23rd.

By September 1st, we grew to 40 souls. With adequate financial support, the establishment of our parish will be very viable. Currently our parishioners travel from two to two and a half hours from three different states i.e., Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin. The surrounding population of over 10 million souls could result in one of the largest parishes of our Diocese. It is important for this parish to get established with a firm financial foundation.

Plainly, the reason for this article is to ask you for your financial assistance. If you're so inclined, we could use your help now. Remember that during every Divine Liturgy you will be commemorated among the blessed and ever memorable founders of our church. Remember also that our God never allows Himself to be in debt and that He handsomely over pays the wages of those who open new churches.

Some of our parishioners have made significant financial sacrifices, but the few cannot do it alone. If you can help us, please contact us at:

Saint John of San Francisco Orthodox Church, Inc.
20662 Francisca Way
Frankfort, Illinois 60423

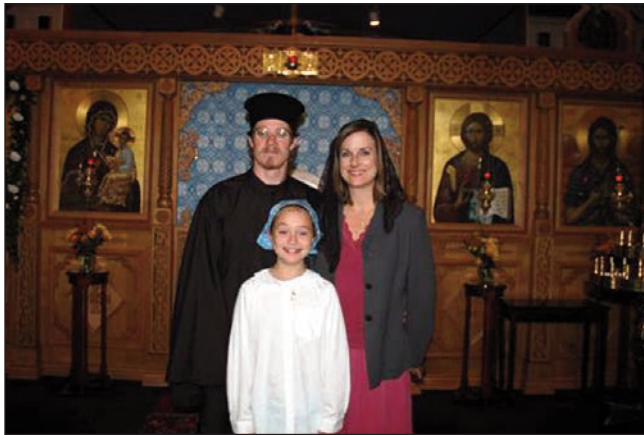
If you have any questions please call me in Brookfield, Wisconsin at (262) 784-3373 or call our Treasurer, Joanne Ketsios in Frankfort, Illinois at (815) 806-8024.

We thank you in advance for your anticipated kindness.

Very Truly,

Theodore Pappas
Parish Vice President

A New Deacon For Saint Nectarios Cathedral



Fr. James, Diaconissa Photini and Katherine

Father James Dimock was born March 9, 1971 in Kirksville, MO. He is the youngest of four children. His father was a chiropractor, and his mother died of cancer when he was ten years old. Father James grew up spending a lot of summers with his pious Protestant grandparents who positively influenced his character. He and his wife Photini and daughter Katherine converted to the Orthodox faith through their contact with the nuns of the Convent of the Meeting of the Lord in Stanwood, WA. They had never even heard of Orthodoxy prior to meeting the Sisters. The Sisters initially came to be chiropractic patients of Dr. Photini. She discovered a love for the holy icons, brought James and Katherine to the Convent on numerous occasions,

which included talks with Father Panteleimon and Father Issac. James, Photini and Katherine were baptized together on Dec. 21/Jan. 3, 2004 at St. Nectarios Orthodox Cathedral by Fr. Ihnat Ponomarchuk. Fr. James was made ecclesiarch soon after, and was ordained a deacon on November 5/18, 2007. Father James and Diaconissa Photini were pilgrims to the Holy Land two years ago, and returned with Katherine as pilgrims to the Holy Land this year.

Father James started a construction business called Sunrise Windows three years ago. Diaconissa Photini is a practicing chiropractor and Katherine is in the fourth grade at Citipoint Christian School in Mount Vernon, WA where the family resides.

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Why My Great Uncle Gave Up The Baptist Ministry

(A humorous but true reminiscence by Marcia Barnard Chandler)

From the 1984 *Old Farmer's Almanac*

The following sad but true little tale concerns my great-uncle, a wonderful, jolly, beloved man who was over six feet four and probably weighed close to 300 pounds. He was also very well educated (Colgate University, Doctor of Divinity), and in the early 1900s became a full-time Baptist minister. A kindly, gentle man despite his enormous size, Uncle Alden Bentley's only real fault seemed to be that he was terribly clumsy. One day when he was a young minister, he was paying a pastoral call to a lady's home in Dillon, South Carolina, when he inadvertently sat on the lady's Chihuahua, Twinkie, and killed it. As the lady searched and called for her dog throughout the house, Uncle Alden felt underneath his hip and, realizing what he had done, suddenly panicked and slipped the dead dog into his coat pocket. Although he was devastated, he could not bring himself to admit to the woman what had happened.

Five years later he returned to the same home for an overnight visit and resolved to unburden himself by finally telling the woman the next morning exactly what had happened to Twinkie. The lady had just had the guest room repapered and had hung brand-new curtains. In order to make Uncle feel welcome, she placed a large pitcher of ice water and a glass on the bedside table as well as a pen and bottle of ink so he could work on his sermon before retiring. Uncle liked to sleep with the window open and got up in the night to open it. As he did, however, he knocked over what he assumed to

be his full glass of water. Then, groping along the walls in an unsuccessful search for the light switch, he retraced his steps several times before raising the window and settling back on the bed for the night. When he opened his eyes the next morning he was horrified. The fresh wallpaper on two walls was covered with great black blobs. The crisp white curtains were thoroughly smudged with the prints of Uncle's huge paws. It had not been the water glass he'd overturned during the night—it had been the ink bottle.

In a shaken state of mind and knowing he must face his hostess, Uncle dressed hurriedly and started down the stairs outside the guest room. As he approached the landing his foot slipped. He grabbed wildly for the nearest object for support, which happened to be a beautiful electric brass candelabra mounted in the stairwell wall. The fixture was hissing and smoking as he ripped it from the wall and toppled down to the landing below, still clutching it in his hand.

"Are you hurt?" his hostess cried as she rushed to Uncle's side.

"No," said Uncle as he rose to his feet, "but I have demolished your home." With that he walked out the front door and, at the end of the walk, turned, and said to his hostess with deep reverence, "Twinkie had a Christian burial."

He then retired from the ministry and was a teacher of philosophy for many years at a private preparatory school in Massachusetts.

The Wind and the Sun

From *Aesop's Fables*

[Sixth Century B.C.]

The Wind and the Sun were disputing which was the stronger. Suddenly they saw a traveler coming down the road, and the Sun said: "I see a way to decide our dispute. Whichever of us can make that traveler take off his cloak shall be regarded as the stronger. You begin."

So the Sun retired behind a cloud, and the Wind began to blow as hard as he could upon the traveler. But the harder he blew the more tightly did the trav-

eler wrap his cloak round him, till at last the Wind had to give up in despair. Then the Sun came out and shone in all his glory upon the traveler, who soon found it too hot to walk with his cloak on, and therefore took it off immediately.

The Moral of the Story: If you want to influence people, the warmth of your love is more likely to succeed than brute force.



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Father Athanasius, 1944–2007

Alan Fogal was born in Bloomington, Illinois. The youngest of ten children, he was raised on a farm near Farmercity. He was naturally quiet but could also be gregarious and playfully funny at times.

On December 19, 1965 he married Sandra Kay Howe. He narrowly escaped the draft into Vietnam in 1967 by divine providence with the birth of his first son, Christian. In 1969 his son Bret was born.

Initially, Alan pursued a career to be a college professor like a few of his older brothers. Studying history was a life-long hobby for him. In 1971 he tried farming on his own. A harsh winter, old cows, and unruly horses ended that venture quickly. Turning to God he felt led to become a preacher. So in 1972 with \$82 to his name and a lot of debt from his failed farming venture, he put all his faith in God, moved to Tulsa, OK, attended Oral Roberts University, and graduated with a Master's in Divinity. He became a Methodist preacher in a small church in Sapulpa, OK. He often talked of miracles that occurred during this period.

After graduation, he enrolled in a course on the Seven Ecumenical Councils taught by Dr. Theodore Williams, (now Hieromonk Theodore of Holy Transfiguration Monastery). At the University library Alan found the writings of the Church Fathers. The Orthodox Church's uncompromising witness to Apostolic Truth commanded the whole of Alan's being. His mind became engrossed by the Fathers of the Church. Through their writings, a new world unfolded before his very eyes. He once told family members that he felt cheated that he was never told about the Church Fathers. To others he expressed frustration over Protestantism's refusal to make even the slightest reference to any of the Patristic commentaries on Holy Scripture. Alan joined the Antiochian jurisdiction. Prior to this move, one Sunday our usually soft-spoken preacher stood before his Methodist congregation to announce that "The Orthodox Church is the true Church." In this public act he became a Confessor of Orthodoxy. He tried to bring his flock with him but was rejected. Some of his parishioners even threatened him with violence. Becoming aware of Ecumenism, he left the Antiochians. He was patient and steadfast in his convictions. But the demons attacked not only his health but also his relationships with family, friends, and employers.

In 1987 after many personal struggles Christian was baptized Christos in the Holy Orthodox Church in North America. Renewed by this unexpected act, Alan also sought baptism and received the name Athanasius.



His marriage of 27 years to Sandy finally dissolved. Since his initial conversion in 1981 their relationship had taken a progressively distant turn in personal goals and values. He wrote many letters to relatives and friends proclaiming Orthodoxy and exposing the dangers of heresy. His efforts were mostly met with hostility, rejection, or complete indifference.

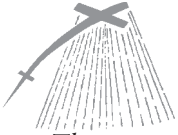
In 1998 he married Gaylynn Copeland who was baptized as Rebekah, and later became Xenia nun. He cared for her and her four children, Keely, Rachel, Ryan (baptized John), and Robin (now Mother Anatolia) with deep love and devotion.

After six years of marriage his wife came down with pancreatic cancer. By that time, Robin had become a novice at Holy Nativity Convent. Athanasius and Rebekah made the difficult move to Boston so she could receive medical treatment and spiritual care. They resided at the monastery and convent. Through her illness, which brought great spiritual benefit to both their souls, they realized that God was calling them to monasticism. Thus his wife was tonsured Rebekah Xenia, nun, and a year after her repose in 2004, he was also tonsured. Only Christos, John and Mother Anatolia were baptized at that time, and Fr. Athanasius constantly prayed for all of his children to be Orthodox.

He moved into the Diocese house of the Metropolis of Boston and helped Metropolitan Ephraim with printing and various other duties for three years. During that time, he was afflicted by many illnesses—diabetes, congestive heart failure, spinal stenosis, gout and then finally colon and liver cancer. He was patient throughout his sufferings and always had a smile and would say "I'm just fine!" He never complained. To his last breath he bore all his afflictions with faith and love of God in his heart.

Bret and his children were baptized some months before Fr. Athanasius reposed. As his end drew near, his family came to be near him. Due to his patience, on the day of his repose he was deemed worthy to see most of his children and grandchildren surrounding him, clothed in white baptismal gowns and Orthodox. A week later Keely and her daughter were baptized, becoming Lydia and Susan respectively.

Transfigured by his sufferings, he was an incredible example of longsuffering. The more difficult his health became the happier and more positive his spirit became. He glorified God in his struggles and prayed for strength. Before his repose he told everyone that he loved them and asked their forgiveness. May God grant rest unto the soul of His servant, and may his memory be eternal! Amen.



About Our Logo
A Divine Confirmation

The cross on our masthead commemorates the miraculous appearance of the sign of the Cross near Athens on Sept. 14 (according to the traditional Orthodox calendar) in 1925. Anti-Orthodox and secularist forces in power in Greece, together with the Ecumenical Patriarchate, had forced the changing of the traditional church calendar in 1924 as a first step toward uniting with the heterodox churches of the West. Shining in the evening sky on the traditional feast day of the Exaltation of the Cross, this extraordinary appearance of the Cross is a divine confirmation of Holy Tradition in the Orthodox Church and of the calendar as one facet of Holy Tradition.

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The Faithful Steward is the official newsletter of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America. Under the editorship of Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston, *The Faithful Steward* appears three times yearly, and is delivered free of charge. The expenses of printing and mailing are covered by the Benevolent Missionary Fund. Address correspondence to:

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“Every good giving and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights” (James 1:17). The perfect gift is the one that only membership in the Church can give: the knowledge of true worship and the grace of the Holy Mysteries. But our era suffers from a famine of truth and the true worship of God. In our weak way, we try to feed those who hunger for God. Your prayers and your donations help the Church in this awe-inspiring ministry. Another way to help is to make a bequest to the Church in your will. Remember that God loves a cheerful giver. Also remember that *The Faithful Steward*, although delivered free of charge to all members of our Church, is in need of your support.



The Faithful Steward

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